

Field Fund Working Group

Final Report

July 8, 2021

Table of Contents:

Section I: Introduction and Working Group Charge

Section II: Field Fund History and Background

Section III: Department of Parks and Recreation Fee Background and Philosophy

Section IV: Benchmarking

Section V : Discussion

Section VI : Engagement

Section VII: Recommendations and Youth Sports Organization Feedback

Appendices

Appendix I: Working Group Charge

Appendix II: Comparison of Current and Recommended Fees

Appendix III. Field Fund Working Group Key Questions

Section I. Introduction and Working Group Charge

It is within the purview of the Sports Commission (SC) Chair to, “Create Working Groups or committees as necessary to accomplish Sports Commission specific missions and objectives.” As such, and in the interest of the Arlington Sports Community, the Field Fund Working Group (FFWG) was commissioned in fall 2019. The FFWG was formed to study the existing Field Fund Fee, or Player Assessment Fee, approved by the County Board in FY 2011. This report details the FFWG charge, research and recommendations for the future of the fund.

The FFWG was charged with examining the Field Fund Fee and similar sports-related fees; examining field fund implementation (uses); benchmarking field fees and implementation in neighboring jurisdictions; and making recommendations to the SC for future Field Fund Fee levels and uses of the Field Fund. As part of its work, the FFWG considered field usage by recreational and travel teams; the number of seasons for which fees should be assessed; and other issues related to administration of the fund. The FFWG charge is contained in Appendix I.

In order to perform a thorough and equitable review of the Field Fund, the help of various Commissions and Committees was enlisted including: the SC, the Park and Recreation Commission (PRC), Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee (FAAC), the Arlington Partnership for Children Youth and Families (APCYF), and Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) staff. Working Group members are listed below:

- Co-Chair – Shirley Brothwell – Sports Commission
- Co-Chair – Peter Lusk – Department of Parks and Recreation
- Member – David Tornquist - Sports Commission
- Member – Stephen Finn – Park and Recreation Commission
- Member - Kimberly Durand – Arlington Partnership for Children Youth and Families
- Member - Alexander Cumana – Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee
- Member – Peter Alchin – Department of Parks and Recreation

The FFWG met five (5) times virtually from September 2020 to January 2021.

Section II. Field Fund History and Background

The Field Fund Fee has been in place for about 10 years. It was first introduced in the FY 2011 budget process. At that time the County Board adopted the fee for youth partner sports organizations who had entered standing agreements with the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). Youth partner sports organizations were to be charged an \$8-per-resident-player fee per season and a \$20 fee for non-resident players per season. The revenue from fees collected, as provided in the FY 2011 budget, was to be “dedicated to athletic field maintenance and replacement capital projects and/or scholarships for youth sports.” This became known as the “Field Fund.”

While the Field Fund Fee may not have been initially popular with youth partner sports organizations, the per player cost remains significantly less cost prohibitive to youth partner sports organizations relative to paying rental fees for exclusive use of Athletic Field Space. This assists in maintaining affordable participation fees for Arlington residents participating in partner sports organizations.

Despite the original intent to allocate funds to field maintenance, capital projects, and scholarships, some youth partner sports organizations objected to the fees being used for field maintenance, which they considered to be a County responsibility. Since youth partner sports organizations independently

provide scholarship support, some felt that the funds should only be used for capital improvements. Once Field Fund implementation began in FY 2011, fees were assessed with the understanding that all funds collected would be directed to field enhancements or capital improvements.

When the County Board adopted the FY 2013-2022 Capital Improvement Plan, it indicated that all funds collected would accumulate and eventually be allocated toward the conversion of an existing rectangular grass field to a synthetic turf field.

Following the first few years of the Field Fund, Diamond Field users engaged with DPR to explore opportunities to create a separate Diamond Field Fund. The Diamond Field Fund, and Diamond Field Fund Committee were established in FY 2014. This allowed Diamond Field users an opportunity to use funds collected to improve existing facilities, instead of waiting to accrue funds for capital investment.

In addition, in FY 2014 an adult team fee of \$100 was added to the Field Fund, in addition to a separate fund created for Diamond Field Users.

The tables below indicate the total amounts collected since FY 2011 from rectangular and diamond field users.¹

Diamond Field Implementations

<i>Fund</i>	<i>FY'11</i>	<i>FY'12</i>	<i>FY'13</i>	<i>FY'14</i>	<i>FY'15</i>	<i>FY'16</i>	<i>FY'17</i>	<i>FY'18</i>	<i>FY'19</i>	<i>Total</i>
Diamond	\$26,380	\$28,518	\$34,636	\$59,948	\$60,708	\$60,274	\$61,067	\$65,376	\$57,416	\$454,323

The Diamond Field Fund has been implemented six (6) times in smaller amounts since its inception, for a total of \$252,500. These implementations are outlined below.

- Three (3) minor maintenance projects – Westover Park \$7,500
- Tuckahoe Batting Cages – Addition to Capital Project..... \$25,000
- Greenbrier Park Storage Shed \$30,000
- Gunston Field #3 Synthetic Conversion..... \$190,000

Rectangular Field Implementations

<i>Fund</i>	<i>FY'11</i>	<i>FY'12</i>	<i>FY'13</i>	<i>FY'14</i>	<i>FY'15</i>	<i>FY'16</i>	<i>FY'17</i>	<i>FY'18</i>	<i>FY'19</i>	<i>Total</i>
Rectangle	\$96,556	\$103,695	\$113,092	\$153,884	\$162,904	\$172,764	\$174,930	\$174,930	\$164,886	\$1,317,111

- \$1.1m of the Rectangular Fund will be used to fund the synthetic turf conversion at the Thomas Jefferson Upper Field in fall/winter 2021-2022.

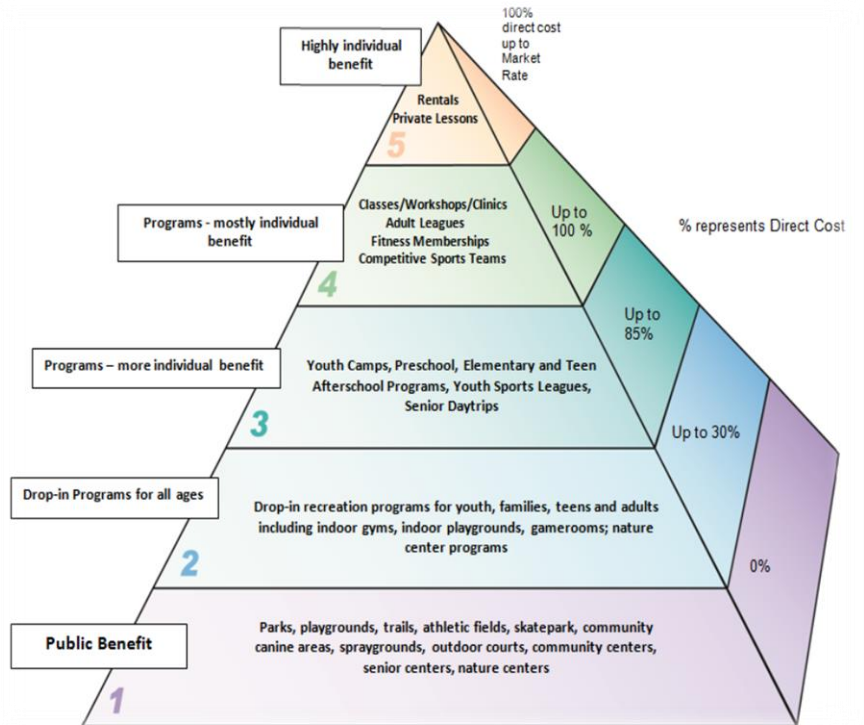
¹ Fees were not assessed for the spring 2020 season due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Section III. Department of Parks and Recreation Fee Background and Philosophy

As part of its effort to examine other types of sports-related user fees, the FFWG studied DPR’s general approach to fee setting. DPR uses a cost recovery model that examines the individual vs public benefit of a program or service. Fees are then set according to the nature of the benefit. Widely used public amenities such as parks and trails are at the bottom of the pyramid, as they are more openly available to the Arlington public; fees are not charged for use of these amenities. More private programs such as swim lessons and personal training are at the top of the pyramid, as they have a great individual benefit. These programs include a low level of public subsidy, and fees are charged to meet DPR’s cost recovery goals.

DPR relies on additional tools when setting fees such as working groups, community surveys, and benchmarking to further inform fee setting. These tools were used when recommending fees for the new Long Bridge Aquatics & Fitness Center, and during the gymnastics and aquatics fee setting Working Group in 2015.

The Field Fund differs from other DPR fees because fees are not being levied for a program or service but rather access to and priority use of a facility. In most governmental fee structures, the fee is designed to recoup cost outlays for services or utilization of a jurisdiction’s resources. The Field Fund has not generally been applied in that manner. Although DPR staff interact with youth partner sports organizations and provide field permits, in most cases the leagues administer their own programs; handle their own registration, scheduling, and marketing; and provide coaches. Some costs are borne by DPR; other costs are borne by the organizations. Therefore, while the cost recovery model is relevant, it does not directly inform how to set fees that govern access to a facility. However, the FFWG was generally mindful of DPR’s overall philosophy throughout the process.



Section IV. Benchmarking

The FFWG completed extensive benchmarking to include three different areas. The first exercise was to compare athletic field inventories to local jurisdictions and the peer cities of the Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP). After completing this benchmarking, the group determined that local jurisdictions were more applicable to this exercise.

Athletic field inventories and corresponding staff and field maintenance budgets are indicated in the chart below:

Benchmarking Chart #1

<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>Total Fields</i>	<i>Athletic Field Staff</i>	<i>Field Maintenance Budget</i>
City of Alexandria	60	21	\$916,000 (\$93,000) Seasonal
Loudoun County	300+	54	\$6,847,500
Fairfax County Park Authority	266	43	\$7,610,338
Arlington County	96	10	\$1,441,781

Arlington's athletic fields vary in size, shape, and playability. Fields are classified as rectangular, diamond, or combination fields. Fields also vary in playing surface, some are natural grass and others are synthetic turf. Each have their own maintenance requirements. Lastly, field classification varies from permit only, to permit-takes-priority, to community use or drop-in fields.

Of Arlington's 96 fields, 13 are permit-only, 77 are permit-priority fields, and 6 are non-permit. When permit priority fields are not reserved, they are available for community use. Maintenance and capital costs vary by field type. In 2015, prior to the start of engagement for the Athletic Field Allocation Guidelines, a field inventory was conducted ranking and scoring fields on diverse criteria. A copy of the report may be found on the FFWG webpage [here](#).

The field inventory resulted in a tiering of the fields. Priority 1 contains 44 fields and consists of competition quality fields; many have lighting and are irrigated. These fields are the most in demand by youth sports organizations and present the vast majority of maintenance and capital costs. Thus, of the 80 permit-only and permit-priority fields, it is that subset of 44 fields Priority 1 fields that cost the most to maintain or require significant capital outlay, i.e., synthetic turf fields. Priority 2 (36 fields) and Priority 3 (12 fields) are generally associated with elementary schools or open grass spaces and receive minimal maintenance

The FFWG also completed a benchmarking exercise to compare fees charged to players participating in youth sports around the region. These fees are indicated in the chart below:

Benchmarking Chart #2

<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>Recreational Fee</i>	<i>Tournament Fee</i>	<i>Travel Fee</i>
City of Alexandria	\$12(Resident) \$35 (Non-Resident)	N/A	\$250 per team
Loudoun County	\$18 Per Player	N/A	N/A
Fairfax County Park Authority	\$8 Rectangular User \$5.50 Diamond User	\$50 per player Rectangular Sports \$15 per player diamond sports	N/A
Arlington County	\$8 (Resident) \$20 (Non-Resident)	N/A	N/A

Last, the FFWG completed benchmarking to assess how fund revenues are allocated in neighboring jurisdictions.

Benchmarking Chart #3

<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>Fee Implementation</i>
City of Alexandria	Fees collected are General Fund revenue.
Loudoun County	50% of fees collected are used for sports league administration. 50% of fees collected are used for athletic field maintenance.
Fairfax County Park Authority	Funds collected are allocated to multiple areas including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletic Field Maintenance • Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) • Synthetic Turf Funding • Diamond Field Maintenance • Funding for girls’ softball fields • Custodial support for indoor facilities
Arlington County	Funds are currently held in two separate funding sources. (1) Rectangular funds are held in accounts for synthetic turf conversions. (2) Diamond funds are held in an account and allocated based on Diamond Field Fund Committee input

Section V: Discussion

Throughout its deliberations, the FFWG focused on key questions to help frame its recommendations, found in Appendix III of this report. The Group's discussions regarding the future of the Field Fund covered the following topics:

- The Fee Level and Frequency of Assessment
- Fixed Fees or Sliding Fee Scale by Age of Participant
- Field Fund Account Structure
- Recreation Player v. Travel Player Fees
- Equity Considerations of Changing Existing Fees
- Fee Implementation: Capital Projects vs. Athletic Field Maintenance
- Equity

Fee Level and Frequency of Assessment - The FFWG considered whether assessing a field user fee is appropriate and if so, whether the fees are presently set at the appropriate level. During our engagement with youth partner sports organizations, some representatives asserted that field users pay for the fields through their taxes and should not be charged an additional fee. Others stated that paying the Field Fund Fee allows leagues to keep participation fees lower for youth league players than they would be if the organizations had to pay rental rates for use of fields. The FFWG determined that field users receive a benefit not available to the general public in the form of scheduled, exclusive access to a public asset, as conveyed through DPR's permit process. The group concluded it was appropriate for field users to pay a fee to receive this benefit.

After determining that the Field Fund Fee should continue, the FFWG noted that the current fee level has not changed since 2010 even though DPR's field-related maintenance costs have risen during this time period. The current \$8 per resident player/per season fee would be almost \$10 per player/per season if it had been indexed to inflation.

In addition, benchmarking indicates that Arlington County charges a lower field fee for youth partner sports organizations than most of the comparative jurisdictions. For example, while Arlington County charges \$8/resident player/per season, most other jurisdictions' resident fees were the same or higher than DPR's fee. Taking inflation and benchmarking into consideration, the FFWG concluded that a modest increase in the Field Fund Fee was reasonable.

Fees are currently assessed for the spring and fall youth sports seasons. The FFWG discussed whether to increase the number of seasons for which fees are assessed by including summer and winter. The spring and fall seasons generally last about 10 weeks each, April to mid-June and September to mid-November. Fields are used outside of these periods, but their usage differs between recreational and travel programs and according to weather conditions. Field use from mid-June to September tends to be for tournament- or travel-based games and practices. Recreation programs' usage in these months has not been extensive and has not lasted the entire summer.

Moreover, in the winter, DPR prohibits use of grass fields from mid-November to mid-March to allow fields to rest. Access is provided to synthetic fields, but in winter these fields have typically been used more by travel than recreational programs. Given the difference in usage conditions in the summer and winter as compared to spring and fall, the FFWG concluded that it is not necessary at this time to expand the number of seasons for which fees are assessed.

Fixed Fee or Sliding Scale by Age of Participant. The FFWG agreed that examining the Field Fund Fee charged to youth partner sports organizations 10 years after inception is reasonable and prudent. Moreover, the nature and extent of sports activity in Arlington has evolved during that period. Youth partner sports organizations have grown in participation and number, and travel programs are far more prevalent than a decade ago. As a result, demand for high quality fields is more intense than when the fee was initially established.

The FFWG considered the most appropriate way to determine the new fee level. The current fee is fixed: all resident field users pay the same fee. The group noted that Arlington County's policy towards user fees, as reflected in the Cost Recovery Model Pyramid, and in its examination of both the County's swim and gymnastics fees, creates a link between the fee level and the benefits received by the individual participating in the activity.

Other fees charged by DPR increase based on the amount of time an athlete spends using a community asset. For example, the Arlington Aquatic Club (AAC) and the Arlington Aerials and Tigers gymnastics teams' fees are charged on a sliding scale based on time in the pool, and time in the gym. These fees were established by a County Board appointed Working Group in 2015. This structure is still in place today. The FFWG sought to use this methodology and apply it to the Field Fund fee.

The FFWG further recognized that athletic field access and quality is aligned in part with player age, which the FFWG considered to be a meaningful measure of the benefits the players receive. The FFWG also found that in allocating their total field time, youth partner sports organizations allocate more time to older players in most cases. Thus, field use increases with player age.

Based on this, the FFWG felt that a sliding scale fee structure tied to player age would better and more fairly reflect field use. The FFWG found that the age of 8 and under was a natural break in terms of field usage. In addition, it reflects the same grouping of ages as in DPR's Athletic Field Allocation Guidelines.

Field Fund Account Structure. As previously mentioned in this report, the existing Field Fund has two accounts: (1) a rectangular field account for fees collected from rectangular users, and (2) a diamond field account for fees collected from diamond field users. The FFWG examined whether to maintain two separate accounts, or whether to combine them.

At its inception in FY 2011, funds collected were held in the same account. In FY 2014, funds collected from diamond field and rectangular field users began to be held in separate accounts. The FFWG reviewed the pros and cons of keeping the funds in separate or a joint account.

The group felt that maintaining separate funds perpetuates the notion that fields are either for diamond or rectangular users, when Arlington's fields are increasingly a shared resource for multi-purpose activities. Separate funds can be perceived as antithetical to DPR's increased need to use fields for more

than one activity, whereas a single fund would help facilitate decisions that are supportive of the multi-use model.

It is also worth noting that the Diamond Field Fund is significantly smaller than the Rectangular Field Fund because of the lower number of diamond field users. The lower amount of diamond field revenue, and the slower pace at which funds accumulate have made it hard to identify and reach consensus among users as to meaningful projects to fund using the Diamond Field Fund Committee model.

Recreational Fees and Travel Fees Teams. Once the FFWG determined that the fee should reflect field usage by age, the next question was whether recreational and travel fees should differ. The current fee structure does not distinguish between recreational and travel players. The FFWG noted that in most cases, travel teams receive more field time and access to higher quality fields than recreational players. Given the greater benefit travel players receive, the FFWG determined it was appropriate to institute a travel player fee.

Benchmarking only showed one model for setting travel related fees, specifically, a travel team fee. The FFWG discussed the value of this model for Arlington and concluded that, because travel team sizes vary by sport and age, a team fee would not be the most equitable approach.² This caused the group to explore a per player fee for travel programs. Unlike recreational programs which register players for individual seasons, typically spring and fall, travel programs typically register players on an annual basis. This caused the group to consider assessing a travel player fee on an annual basis. An annual fee for travel players would also address costs for their time on fields outside of the spring and fall seasons.

The nature and extent of athletic field use was considered and applied to all topics related to the FFWG. Travel teams often use the highest quality fields in the athletic field inventory. When the Field Fund was first implemented, travel teams were less prevalent than they are now. The FFWG found it imperative that travel teams or players be considered separately from recreational players.

Fee Implementation: Capital Projects v. Field Maintenance. The FFWG carefully considered the purpose, application, and implementation of the funds collected. Throughout its meetings, the FFWG debated five implementation options for the fund including:

- Additional Field Maintenance Staff
- Contracted Field Maintenance
- Increasing the Number of Priority I Athletic Fields Through Field Conversions
- Minor Capital Projects
- Major Capital Projects

Since its inception, the funds collected through the Field Fund have been used only for field improvements, and not for field maintenance. The FFWG considered use of funds for routine field maintenance, and contracted field maintenance. Given that the definition of, “maintenance” may be broad and burdensome, the FFWG considered whether Field Fund revenue should be utilized to increase the DPR field maintenance staff.

² For example, a \$100 team fee would equate to \$8.33 per player for a team of 12 and \$6.66 per player for a team of 15.

The group also determined that field users need to understand how their fees were being used and there should be a clear, justifiable use for the increased resources derived from the proposed increased fee.

The FFWG did not support using increased fees to replace current budgetary resources devoted to field maintenance and improvement, i.e., increased fees should result in an overall increase to the resources being allocated to Arlington's fields. This perspective was in part influenced by the benchmarking exercise, which showed that Arlington has significantly fewer personnel resources assigned to field care and maintenance and spends comparatively less on its fields than neighboring jurisdictions. (See Benchmarking Chart #1.) The group also discussed whether the fee could be combined with County financing activities, i.e., bonds, to expedite the completion of Field Fund projects. However, County staff indicated from the budgeting perspective that was not an option.

The Working Group felt it appropriate to return to the Board's founding intent of the Field Fund, to use fees for both field maintenance and replacement capital projects. Addressing both objectives will improve the safety and playability of athletic fields, improve current player experience, and provide a benefit to players who currently pay the field fee. The FFWG recognized that youth partner sports organizations expressed strong support for expanding field use through synthetic field conversions.

From the benchmarking process, the FFWG noted the disparity in the number of field maintenance employees as compared to other jurisdictions. The majority of current maintenance personnel hours are allocated to grass field (versus synthetic) upkeep. At present, most diamond fields are grass whereas rectangular fields are both grass and synthetic, but a vast majority of the County's synthetic fields are rectangular. A related consideration is that one affiliated youth program, Arlington Soccer Association (ASA), pays the vast majority of field fees because of its size. ASA prefers its fees be used for capital investment in synthetic fields and is sensitive to their participants paying fees that support other sports users. While ASA does use grass fields, including at times diamond fields, the cost of maintaining rectangular grass fields is substantially lower than the cost of maintaining diamond grass fields. Nevertheless, the capital costs of synthetic files is substantially higher than grass diamond fields. Thus, the FFWG felt it productive to divide the Field Fund for both maintenance and capital activities, which would generally afford benefits to both diamond and rectangular field users.

The FFWG's charge included developing criteria for the implementation of the field fund in the future. The FFWG concluded that the best and most transparent method for determining the priority among fields to be converted to synthetic turf would be to consider the extensive work that went into the Public Spaces Master Plan. The PSMP contains a priority list of possible field conversions that the FFWG recommends DPR consult as part of a transparent deliberative process with sports users in identifying which fields to convert to synthetic turf.

Equity. Consistent with the County Board's equity resolution adopted in September 2019, the FFWG considered the following questions in any decision making related to the field fund:

- Who Benefits?
- Who Is Burdened?
- Who Is Missing?
- How Do We Know?

The FFWG considered the equity implications of each topic it discussed. From a financial standpoint, the FFWG was concerned that fees should not become a barrier to participation. DPR's policy is to not charge the Field Fee to any child participating in a partner youth sports program who has been provided a program fee waiver or scholarship.

Because partner youth sports organizations absorb the cost of those children, the FFWG found no basis to charge partner organizations the Field Fee for scholarship players, which would be an additional cost for the affiliates that they were not recouping. The FFWG focused on aligning fees with usage to ensure that users' fees are a fair and equitable reflection of the benefit received.

Section VI: Engagement

The FFWG facilitated multiple opportunities for youth partner sports organization feedback throughout the Working Group Process. Following the first two meetings of the FFWG, the Working Group invited youth partner organizations to a Working Group meeting to learn about the topics of the first two meetings, and to provide feedback related to the field fund.

Following the conclusion of the Working Group, DPR staff and the Working Group Co-chairs held individual meetings with each youth partner organization representatives to review the FFWG recommendations and obtain additional feedback.

The youth partner sports organizations had a range of comments on the Field Fee and associated Fund implementation:

- The Fund should not be used to replace current funding levels. All implementation should result in increased resources devoted to field improvements and upkeep.
- Some were concerned that DPR's decision to unlock fields, particularly diamond fields, has resulted in additional degradation of field conditions.
- Youth partner sports organizations want to be consulted on implementation of the Field Fund. They felt it very important that they be able to weigh in on DPR's decisions about capital improvement projects.
- Funds raised and implementation decisions should be transparent.
- Youth partner leagues had a preference that the funds be used for capital investment, particularly synthetic turf conversions and lighting fields that are not currently lit, because these actions will expand field capacity.

Section VII. Recommendations and Youth Sports Organization Feedback

Following five Working Group meetings, benchmarking, examination of fee levels and potential implementations, and engagement with sports users in Arlington, the FFWG is proposing the following for the future of the Field Fund:

- A modest increase to field user fees. (Appendix II compares the current and proposed fees.)
- The adoption of a sliding scale that charges a slightly higher fee to players aged 9 and above based on field use.
- The creation of a Travel Player fee. This fee was proposed at a level that is slightly higher than what a recreational player aged 9 and above would pay for the spring and fall seasons combined.

- To ease the impact of the new Travel Player fee, the group proposed that travel players who play in recreational and travel programs would be exempt from paying the recreational fee for that season.
- Increasing the Adult Team Fee from \$100 to \$200. Most adult teams average between 15-20 players per roster. This increase is a modest increase per player.

The FFWG proposed that the funds would be used to cover the annual cost of two (2) additional maintenance staff for an estimated cost of about \$150,000 per year. The group then proposed that the remaining approximately \$300,000 would accumulate toward large capital investments in one fund.

When presenting these recommendations to youth partner sports organization representatives, the following themes were consistent throughout the feedback opportunities:

- 1) Most leagues agree that it is time to raise the fee and re-visiting the Field Fund and its uses after 10 years is appropriate.
- 2) Combining the fees into one fund is more appropriate than separate funds provided that the funds allocated to capital improvements are used for multi-use fields.
- 3) If the Field Fund is to be used to fund DPR maintenance staff, the Fund shouldn't be used as a substitute for County funding, but as an addition/supplement.

The Field Fund Working Group recommends that the Sports Commission make the following recommendations to the County Board for the FY 2023 budget process:

Recommendation #1 - Approve the new fee structure below.

<i>Fee Type</i>	<i>Fee Per Season</i>
Resident Recreational Youth 8U	\$10
Non-resident Recreational Youth 8U	\$25
Resident Recreational Youth 9+	\$15
Non-resident Recreational Youth 9+	\$30
Resident Travel Player	\$40
Non-Resident Travel Player	\$65
Adult Team Fee	\$200

Recommendation #2 - Eliminate the existing Diamond Field Fund, and Diamond Field Fund Committee as approved by the County Board in FY 2014 and establish one account to hold all field funds contributed by youth and adult sports leagues.

Recommendation #3 - Use the new funds collected through the Field Fund in two ways:

- Fund two (2) permanent full-time Athletic Field Maintenance employees; and
- Fund synthetic field conversions with the funds collected in excess of the cost of the two additional employees.

Recommendation #4 - Use the Public Spaces Master Plan to identify the athletic fields to be converted to synthetic fields using the Field Fund with an eye towards creating multi-use athletic facilities.

Recommendation #5 – DPR should annually brief the Sports Commission about Field Fund revenues and implementation.

Field Fund Player Assessment Working Group Charter

Background

In FY 2011, the County Board approved implementation of a sports league fee to help pay for athletic field maintenance and improvement. Neighboring jurisdictions also assess field user fees. Funds were to be accumulated in the Pay-As-You-Go capital improvement program for the upkeep and replacement of Arlington County athletic fields. A youth participant \$8 per-player, per-season fee was approved for residents and a \$20 per-player, per-season fee was approved for non-residents. During the 2014 budget process, a \$100 team fee was added for adult field users.

Initially, funds collected from rectangular field users and diamond field users were held in the same account. Sports leagues that use rectangular fields requested that the funds be allowed to accumulate to \$1 million to help pay for the conversion of a grass field to synthetic turf. In FY 2014 the County Board approved a Diamond Field Fund Committee as part of the Sports Commission, to direct fees collected from diamond sports users to fund enhancements to the County's inventory of diamond fields. Since then, rectangular and diamond field funds have been tracked separately by the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR).

Between adoption and December 2019, about \$1.8 million has been collected through the field fees. Approximately \$252,500 of diamond field fees have been implemented on 6 improvement projects. No rectangular field fees have been spent, but plans are in place to spend just over \$1 million to convert a rectangular field at Thomas Jefferson Middle School from grass to synthetic turf.

At its November 2019 meeting, the Sports Commission discussed the current player assessment fee. A comprehensive review has not occurred since the fees were adopted 8 years ago. Questions were raised about fee purpose and policy objective, fee structure and amount, and the process by which spending decisions are made. Sports Commission members agreed that more information is needed about the current state and future direction of the fee program.

The Sports Commission is charged with examining and making recommendations on "the adequacy and efficiency of the County's existing sports and physical fitness programs, including fees charged. The Commission has authority to "create committees as necessary to accomplish specific Sports Commission missions and the Chairman shall appoint committee leadership; Committee membership may include persons who are not on the Sports Commission."

As Chairman of the Sports Commission, it is my intention to create a multi-discipline Field Fund Working Group (FFWG) Group to review, study, and propose fees assessed to youth and adult sports league participants in Arlington, and to propose a new framework for allocating field funds to improve maintenance efforts for Arlington's athletic field inventory.

Charge

The FFWG is charged with making recommendations through the Sports Commission to the County Board on the structure and use of the field user fee and its effects on athletic field users. In developing such recommendations, the FFWG shall examine the origins and purpose of the field user fee; fee structure and amounts in Arlington County and neighboring jurisdictions; the impact of field fees on field users, using equity as a consideration; the relationship between fees and field access, availability, and utilization; and the process by which field fund implementation decisions are made.

Proposed Timeline

The Working Group is to meet throughout 2020 and complete work by the end of calendar year 2020. The Department of Parks and Recreation staff liaison will work with the Working Group Chair to establish meeting schedules, locations, and agendas. Recommendations will be submitted by the Sports Commission to the County Board as part of the FY 2022 budget process in spring 2021.

Working Group Composition

- Chair – Member of the Sports Commission (SC)
- Co-Chair – DPR Staff (DPR)
- Sports Commission – Member (SC)
- DPR – Staff Member (DPR)
- Park and Recreation Commission – Member (PRC)
- Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee – Member (FAAC)
- Partnership for Children Youth and Families – Member (PCYF)

Staffing

Other County staff will serve as resources to the FFWG to provide subject matter expert (SME) input as requested by the Working Group Chair. The Athletic and Facility Services Division will serve as the co-chair of the FFWG.

Areas of Consideration for the Working Group

Policy Objectives:

- Examine fee setting methodology for recently set DPR fees including: The Long Bridge Aquatics & Fitness Center Membership Fees, the Pool Use Fee implemented by DPR in FY '20, and current gymnastics and swimming team fees.
- Examine details of these fees including their structure and levels and make recommendations on factors to be considered when setting these fees including hours of field use, field type, and length of seasons.
- Examine the previous implementation of field fund projects and assess their impact on athletic fields and field users.

Benchmarking and Current Fee Review:

- Complete benchmarking of neighboring jurisdictions and peer cities used in the Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP) to determine if current fees assessed are comparable with regional and national trends.
- Study field use time by recreation and travel players and determine if a sliding fee scale is appropriate for different age groups and uses.
- Study field use time during the year and determine the number and duration of “seasons” for which fees should be assessed to Arlington sports leagues

Field Fund Implementation:

Following examination of previous field fund implementations, recommend uses of funds collected from the player assessment fee, and their impact on athletic fields and field users.

- Determine the most effective implementation of funds collected from the player assessment fee with a mind towards increasing field maintenance levels in Arlington.
- Establish new player assessment fees or recommend no change in current fee levels.
- Establish criteria for implementation of the field fund in the future.

Fiscal Considerations

The current DPR Athletic Field Maintenance Budget is \$1,441,781. \$895,000 of this budget is allocated to 10 Full-Time Employees (FTE’s). An additional \$547,000 is allocated towards field maintenance including contracted services for irrigation, nutrient management, and general field maintenance supplies. Currently, funds collected from the field fund are not allocated towards this budget.

Since implementation the rectangular field fund has collected \$1,317,111.68. \$1,061,000 of these funds are committed to the Thomas Jefferson Park Upper Field synthetic conversion scheduled to take place in 2020. Since implementation the Diamond Field Fund has collected \$453,323. These funds have been allocated six (6) times totaling \$252,489. Most notably \$190,000 was used to aid in funding the synthetic turf conversion at the diamond field at Gunston Park in 2018.

At the time of this report \$252,489 remains in the rectangular fund and \$201,834 remains in the diamond field fund.

Community Outreach

Throughout the work of the FFWG, collaboration with the Arlington sports community will be a high priority and will take different forms. Public meetings will be held to engage the sports community, and to solicit feedback regarding FFWG progress. In addition, the FFWG will implement a variety of communication tools including but not limited to:

- Surveys
- A Working Group webpage
- Public Meeting Notices
- Informational Emails
- Social Media

Deliverables

The FFWG will make recommendations to the Sports Commission in fall/winter 2020. In addition to the Sports Commission, the FFWG will present findings and recommendations to all commissions and committees represented on the FFWG.

All presentations and meeting materials will be made will be publicly available at least 10 days prior to the FY 2022 budget work session in March 2021.

Shirley Brothwell

Chair, Sports Commission

January 2020

Appendix II. Proposed New Field Fund Fees and Previous Fees

Fee Type	Current Fee	Fee Proposal
Resident Recreation Player Youth 8u	\$8	\$10
Non-Resident Recreation Player Youth 8u	\$20	\$25
Resident Recreation Youth Player 9+	\$8	\$15
Non-Resident Recreation Youth Player 9+	\$20	\$30
Travel Player	N/A	\$40
Non - Resident Travel	N/A	\$65
Adult Team Fee	\$100	\$200

Appendix III. Field Fund Working Group Key Questions

- 1) Is the fee for use of athletic fields in Arlington set at the correct level?
- 2) Should different fees for recreation and travel programs be considered?
- 3) Should the field fund be allocated for investment in capital projects?
- 4) Should the field fund be allocated for recurring field maintenance?
- 5) Should field funds be held in separate diamond field and/or rectangular field accounts?
- 6) Should field funds be allocated to support more staff?
- 7) How to view the field fund through an equity lens?